

Church of God Sunday School

THE STORY OF THE GIBEONITES

Joshua 9:1 — 10:27



THE GIBEONITES DECEIVE THE MEN OF ISRAEL.

The Israelites had defeated the cities of Jericho and Ai (*AY-i*). They were getting ready to move on and conquer the rest of the people in the Promised Land. God commanded Joshua to destroy these idol-worshipping people so that they would not turn the people of Israel away from the worship of the one true God.

The Gibeonites (*GIHB-ee-uhn-ites*) were people who lived in the land. When they heard of Israel's great victories, they decided that the only way to escape being conquered and killed by the Israelites was to trick Joshua and the Israelites into letting them live.

The Gibeonites came up with a plan to save their lives. They decided to send some men to Joshua who would pretend to be *ambassadors* from a far country. (An ambassador is a messenger who represents his country.)

Before leaving, the ambassadors put old sacks on their donkeys. They took wine bottles that were torn and bound up. They did not forget to take some stale bread along. The bread was not only dry but also moldy. All these things would help to make the Gibeonites' story sound true.

To make their story more believable, the men put on ragged, old, worn-out clothes. They put on old shoes that were "clouted" (patched). All this was done to make it seem that the men had walked a long way.

When the Gibeonites arrived in the camp of the

Israelites, they pretended to be humble, saying, "We are thy servants." They told the Israelites that they were from a far country and wanted to make a *league* (an agreement) with them. At first, the men of Israel were a little cautious, for God had told them not to make a league with the people of Canaan (Deuteronomy 7:2). They asked the Gibeonites how they could make a league with people who might be living among them.

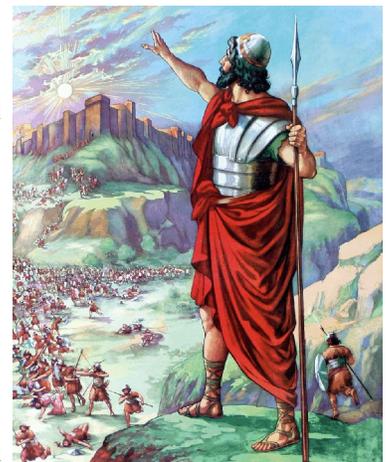
Again, the Gibeonites assured Joshua that they were "from a very far country." Then they showed the men of Israel their moldy bread, old clothes, torn wine bottles, and patched shoes. They lied and said that the bread was just baked and the wine bottles were new when they left. They also said, "Our garments and our shoes are become old by reason of the very long journey."

Joshua and the Israelites believed the Gibeonites' story. They *did not* ask God for an answer on the matter. They acted on their own feelings and promised to spare the lives of the Gibeonites.

Three days later, the Israelites learned the truth—the Gibeonites were really their close neighbors, and the city of Gibeon (*GIHB-ee-uhn*) was "one of the royal cities." It was a great city, full of mighty men. Oh, the Israelites were sorry they had not talked to God first! They could not kill the Gibeonites. They had promised to let them live.

There was only one thing the Israelites could do: they could make servants out of the Gibeonites. After all, the Gibeonites had said they were Israel's servants. So that is what the Israelites did. For the rest of their lives, the Gibeonites had to draw water and cut wood for the Israelites.

Now, when the king of Jerusalem



heard that the Gibeonites had made peace with Israel, he sent four other kings and their men of war to fight against Gibeon. These five kings "gathered themselves together" and "made war against" Gibeon.

What did the Gibeonites do? They sent word to Joshua, asking him for help, since they were the Israelites' servants. Joshua and all the men of war went to help the Gibeonites.

The Lord said to Joshua, "Fear them not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee." Joshua and his mighty men traveled all night. They surprised those five kings and all their men. Many of the Israelites' enemies were killed.

The five kings and the rest of their men tried to run away, but God hurled "great stones from heaven" (hailstones) down upon them! They could not get away from the big hailstones. Those hailstones killed more men than the Israelites did.

The battle still went on. The Israelites had not won yet, and Joshua was very concerned. He spoke to the Lord about it. Then he did a strange thing. Joshua turned to the sun and the moon and said, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon [*AY-juh-lon*]."

God heard the voice of Joshua, and "the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies." The sun and the moon actually stayed where they were in the sky until the Israelites won the battle! The sun did not go down for almost a whole day. Think of it! In all of history there has never been another day like that; and God's Word, the Bible, tells us there never will be another day like that. God fought for Israel that day!

Meanwhile, in the midst of the battle, the five kings fled to a cave to hide. They thought they would be safe in the cave. But Joshua ordered his men to roll big stones to the mouth of the cave. Instead of the kings being safe, they became prisoners! At the end of the battle, Joshua had the five kings brought out of the cave. They were killed and hanged on five trees until the sun went down. After that, Joshua took them and buried them in the same cave in which they had tried to hide.

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**MEMORY VERSE:**

*"Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight." —Joshua 10:25*  
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